PRAISE and ADORATION.

OR, A

SERMON

ON

TRINITY-SUNDAY

BEFORE THE

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BY

THOMAS MANNYNGHAM, M. A.
late Fellow of *New-Colledge Oxford.*

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PSALM 103. V. 1.

Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul! and all that is within me bleſs his holy Name!

THere is an *Habitual*, and alſo an *Actual praiſing* or Glorifying of God: the *firſt* conſiſts in a regular conformity of our Lives, or the general courſe of our Actions to the holy Will and Commands of God: But *Actual Adoration*, which is to be the Subject of my Enſuing Diſcourſe, is it ſelf a peculiar and ſolemn part of Divine Worſhip: which does not only conſiſt in an open recitation of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, but alſo in a ſilent Exultation of our Faculties, and a Religious warmth of Soul wrought by Heavenly Objects.

Now there are many Words and Phraſes in holy Scripture, eſpecially in this Book of Pſalms, which are often us'd to expreſs the ſame Duty of Bleſſing or praiſing the Lord; And though they are promiſcuouſly inſerted (as certainly they ought

to be, either in Popular or Poetick Writings) yet are they, many of them, of peculiar limitation and ſignificancy; which being ſomewhat ſtated and explain'd, may ſerve to eſtabliſh a full and eaſie notion of what in my following Diſcourſe I ſhall make more copious and leſs nice reflexions.

Wherefore our moſt humble and worthy apprehenſions, our ſincere devout reſentments of the Divine Perfections, are neceſſarily requir'd to conſtitute the *Inviſible Adoration* of the Heart, and Soul, and Spirit; which from its Vital and inward heat, is continually diſplaying itſelf into great variety of External evidences, according to the diverſity of thoſe objects about which it is immediately converſant. So that we may be ſaid to *praiſe* the Lord, when we declare his free and moſt excellent works of Mercy and Juſtice, of Creation and Providence: to *Magnifie* and *Adore* him, when we ſet forth his incommunicable and Natural Excellencies, ſuch as his Omnipotence, Immenſity, *&c.* which joyntly conſider'd, with his Univerſal Dominion and Soveraignty over all Creatures, may ſeem to ſignifie all that we mean by the *Glorious Majeſty* of God. We may be ſaid to *Bleſs* the Lord by our wiſhes and words; and being the good we wiſh is Extrinſic to his Nature, and not yet obtained, as, that the whole world

world may be converted and fear his Name, &c. we must be sure to bless him with our *endeavours* too: But chiefly this *Blessing* is effected by our most *solemn Gratulations*; for seeing we cannot confer any real good on God, we must continually express our joy and gladness for his actual possession of all possible perfection. To *worship* him, usually denotes a most humble posture of Body, when we incline towards, or prostrate our selves on that Dust out of which we were made. We *Glorifie* God with our Mouths; and accordingly the Psalmist calls his Tongue his Glory, Awake thou my Glory. *Thanksgiving* is an open profession, and a hearty acknowledgment that we have received a Benefit most freely, and without any merit of our own. *Adoration* and *Thanksgiving* seem to differ in these respects: we *adore* God for things that were acted long ago, which concern not us any more, than that they were the Effects of his Omnipotence, as for all the Wonders done in the behalf of the Children of *Israel*: *Thanksgiving* relates to those Benefits which either we immediately receive, or whose effects are communicated to us. Also we *Adore* God for his Judgments and his Vengeance, however displayed, either on our Enemies, or on our selves; for which we are not properly said

to return *Thanksgivings*; becauſe *Adoration* reſpects the *Juſtice* of the Action, *Thanksgivings* the *goodneſs* of it. Theſe words and phraſes being thus ſomewhat explain'd, I ſhall make no ſcruple to uſe them again in their popular ſenſe and freedom, according as I ſhall find occaſion for them, in my farther amplifications on the Text, which I will endeavour to handle in theſe *three* reſpects.

I. You may be pleas'd to conſider the *Neceſſity* and *Excellence* of *Praiſe* and *Adoration*. *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul.*

II. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew what are thoſe *Faculties* and *Capacities* of the Soul, whereby this *Adoration* is perform'd. *All that is within me.*

III. I will point out ſome of thoſe *Benefits* which will ariſe from a Worthy performance of the Duty. *Bleſs the Lord*, &c.

I. You may be pleas'd to conſider the *Neceſſity* and *Excellence* of *Praiſe* and *Adoration*. *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul.*

Prayers

Prayers and *Praiſes* which bear the name of all that we can properly call *Divine Worſhip*; are as well the Eternal Dictates of *Nature*, as the moſt Sacred Commands of *Revelation*; and if there may be allowed any remarkable precedency in theſe higher Duties of Natural and Reveal'd Religion, *Praiſe* or *Adoration* ſeems juſtly to challenge that Prerogative: for ſhould not we firſt acknowledge our being, before we view and lament its imperfections? ſhould not we return our ſacrifices of Gratitude for what we have already received, before we implore the Divine Benignity for further acceſſions, freſh ſupplies, and new aſſiſtances? Common Juſtice obliges us at all times, firſt to look back and magnifie the Lord for our actual preſervation, before we preſume to put up our Petitions for pardon and future ſecurity; and it requires a Pſalm of Thankſgiving, that we are in a capacity to know our wants, to ſurvey our Infirmities. The meanneſs of our nature has indeed placed us below the poſſibility of making any Recompence, and yet the indigency of our condition, ſtill calls upon us to make freſh acknowledgments: and however imperfect theſe oblations are, yet are they the only ſhew of real ſervice we can render, the

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only Image of requital which our Creator has indulged us.

And as this Adoration is our indiſpenſable Duty, ſo 'tis our Advantage and our glory too: 'tis not only the buſineſs of our Creation, but the Excellency of it; and we never appear in a more exalted State, than when we *Glorifie*. In the performance of this Duty, we more eminently make our Communion with Saints and Angels, whilſt with thoſe Bleſſed Spirits we conſtitute the ſame Choire, and make one Univerſal Hallelujah.

Nothing ſurely can be more *Juſt* and *Natural*, than to imploy our breath to the glory of him who gave it us: nothing more *profitable*, than to magnifie the Lord into greater Mercies to ourſelves: Nothing more *delightful*, than to be always full of glorious conceptions, always pouring forth the Language of Bleſſing and Affection! *Prayers* are but the Mournful Draught and Table of our Miſery, the repreſentation of our Ship-wreckt Nature: *Repentance* has a gloomy ſide; but *Praiſe* is Faiths and Reaſons Triumph, a bright, unmixt, immaculate Joy, and only wants ſome few degrees of being all we can conceive of Heaven. Therefore

II. You

II. You may be pleas'd to consider what are those Faculties and Capacities of the Soul whereby this Duty is perform'd.

Now the powers of the Soul which are more eminently concern'd in the *Acts* of Adoration, seem to be *these Three.*

1. Our Reason. 2. Our Imagination. 3. Our Affections. For we may be said to Praise the Lord with our *Reason* in these two respects. 1 When it perfectly and freely submits to the *High Mysteries* of *Faith*, or the Doctrines of *pure Revelation.* 2. When it humbly and devoutly busies itself about the *Nature* and *Attributes* of *God*, manifested in the works of *Creation* and *Providence*; and though they are objects of Revelation too, yet have they a sure foundation in *Right Reason* and *Natural Religion*, and therefore may safely admit of a *modest* and *affectionate* enquiry. We may be said to praise the Lord with our *Imagination*, when we study to adorn our Divine Conceptions with the most *Excellent Idea's*, with the most *lively Representations* we can invent.

Lastly, We may be said to Praise the Lord with our *Affections*, when the whole Duty is per-

perform'd with ſtrong vehemency of Soul, and intenſeneſs of Spirit, with the Unions of *Love* and *Wonder*, and ſuch like bright Affections as perfect and exalt our moſt Spiritual performances. Of theſe in their Order.

1. We may be ſaid to Praiſe the Lord with our *Reaſon*, when it perfectly and freely ſubmits itſelf to the High Myſteries of *Faith*, or the Doctrines of *pure Revelation.*

And is it not an eſpecial Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion, that, as all its Precepts for *Life* and *Manners* are ſo perſpicuouſly deliver'd, and ſo perfectly agreeable to the beſt conceptions of Mankind, that the *humble* perſon cannot miſtake his way to Heaven; ſo alſo there are ſuch Hights and Depths in the receſſes of our *Faith*, as perhaps the Seraphims cannot comprehend? And although theſe Propoſitions of our *Belief* alſo be as *clear* and *Evident* as Hiſtory and Language can make them; as infallibly *true* and *certain* as that God who has reveal'd them; yet even in our modeſt contemplations on them, the exceſſive glory of the Revelation is apt to ſtrike back, and ſcatter our Natural light into the Confuſions of Broken Knowledge and Admiration; into Humility, Love, Praiſe, and Reſignation; thus *perfecting* our Natures, whilſt it confounds

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our Enquiries! So that the most *Speculative Mysteries* of Christianity, how Incomprehensible soever in their *Intrinsic Natures*, are yet as serviceable and conducive to the Ends of Religion, (*viz.*) the *glory* of *God*, and the promoting *true Holiness*, as the most practical and familiar Doctrines and encouragements of the Gospel.

Were indeed our *Mysteries* like those of the ancient Heathen, whose *Adyta* and *Penetralia* were but so many Cloysters of Separated Impurity, so many Concealments of Spiritual Craft, or of Mystical and Appropriated Lust; then the nice examining world might very well complain of the Impostures of Priests, of the absurdities of a Superstitious Faith: but when the *Mysteries* we pretend to, are not such as are made so by Shrines, Temple-characters, and a Traditionary Caution; but such as are expos'd to the promiscuous, yet humble view of all men, in *Confessions*, *Creeds*, and *Catechisms*; and being thus expos'd, they are no *Incongruities* to our *Moral conceptions*, as most of the Heathen's were; nor yet *Contradictions* to our *Natural Reasoning*, as some would have them; (for they are not such objects as lye within its Sphere, or within the reach of its common Axioms) but are rather so many Humiliations of our Understandings, so many Gracious Affrightments, and

incomprehenſible endearments of our Souls unto *Love* and *Obedience*: So that if the thoughts of a *Trinity* in *Unity*, and a *Unity* in *Trinity*, amaze thy mind, thou mayſt preſently relieve thy ſelf with this contemplation, That all this Unconceivable Diſtinction of *Subſiſtences* extends itſelf to thy Benefit and Comfort, to reach thee out of Perdition and thy Primitive Curſe! that all this Ineffable *œconomy* of the Divinity is thy Redemption, thy Sanctification, in a word, thy *Multiply'd Salvation!* And conſidering likewiſe, that on one ſide we have the expreſs Declarations of Holy *Scripture*, the Definitions of general *Councils*, the Writings and Devotions of Primitive *Fathers*, the Blood and Conſciences of Holy *Martyrs*, to teſtifie and ſeal their early *Antiquity*, their Venerable *Certainty*, and moſt faithful *Conveyance*; and then on the other ſide, that there is nothing but Scholaſtick *Subtilty*, and preſumptuous *Enthuſiaſm*, to *Weaken* or *Corrupt* them; bold *Philoſophy*, malicious *Cavilling*, and impious *Blaſphemy*, to *oppoſe* them; I ſay, conſidering all theſe things, what poſſibly can deter any *good* and *humble* man, even in this perverſe diſputing Age, from Triumphantly embracing the *Myſteries* of Faith with a ſtrong and Heroical aſſent, with a noble captivity of Mind, and the moſt vigorous *Acts* of *Adoration*?

Happy

Happy had it been for the Christian world, if these *Eminencies* in Religion had been always guarded with a Flaming Cherubim, and been only made the illustrious Themes of *Praise* and *Adoration!* But now, alas! the Controversies of the Church about these higher points, will hardly suffer us to speak *Devotionally* of our Mysteries! *Grammatical* niceties, and *Socinian* figures, have weaken'd the Native Reverence of many Texts! Every *Dutch Systeme* is arrogantly big with the bold explications of the Mysterious *Trinity*, and of those heights and depths before which the very Angels tremble and vail! What if some holy persons of old, perhaps of more Piety and devout affections, than Learning and Philosophy, were admitted (like *Moses* into the Cloud) humbly to converse with God about this Dreadful *Mystery*, to be a Bank and a Mound against an eager and impetuous *Heresie* then raging in the Church; and to be a standing Authority against all future swellings of proud Contention; yet there is no reason but that there should be some restraint also about *this Mountain* too, to fence off the Multitude and Common Beasts, and to keep the Viler Herd at awful distance, lest they break through unto the Lord, to gaze and perish! *Exod. 19. v. 21.*

2. We may be ſaid to *Praiſe* the Lord with our *Reaſon*, when it humbly and devoutly buſies itſelf about the *Nature* and *Attributes* of God manifeſted in the works of *Creation* and *Providence*; And although they are Objects of Divine Revelation too, yet have they a ſure foundation in *Right Reaſon*, and *Natural Religion*, and therefore may ſafely admit of a modeſt and affectionate enquiry. *Bleſs his holy Name.*

Where, by the *Name* of God is meant all that we are able to conceive of his *Perfections*, his *Nature* and *Attributes*; and thoſe not as they are *Metaphyſically* handled, and jejunely mingled with the *Definitions* of the Schools, but as they are moſt *pathetically* ſet forth in *Holy Scripture* by his miraculous *works*, and gracious *diſpenſations* to Mankind.

Alas! it is not the dry Skeleton of dead and ſhapeleſs Reaſon, or the Scholaſtick joynting of prodigious Terms, (which repreſent an Image rather *Gaſtly* than *Admirable*) that can excite and animate our *Gratulations* and our *Praiſes*; but there muſt be the Life, and Features, and all the *Moving Elegance* of the Frame, to give us bright conceptions of its Dignity. And therefore we find that Holy *Scripture* ſcarce ever meddles with an *Attribute* in its *Abſolute* Nature, but only in a

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Relative and endearing way; and that *Creation* and *Providence*, (which are richly pregnant with all those *Divine Perfections* which most nearly concern us) are the two chosen and most sublime Topi's on which the *Eucharistical Psalms* are chiefly spent.

And who among us can forbear from breaking forth into acts of *Praise* and *Adoration*, when he considers how the Almighty was pleas'd out of his Infinite and Boundless *Goodness*, according to the *freedom* of his Eternal Decree, I must not say to *Empty*, but to *Irradiate* himself into this amazing variety of Beings, this stupendous Fabric of the world, indefinite to our most Travelling Conceptions, and only *less infinite* than He who made it? *Here we may behold his* Wisdom *in its Throne, and praise him in the Firmament of his power! whilst we attentively recal how by his Word the Heavens were made, and all the Host of them by the breath of his Mouth! how he spread out the skie like a Molten Glass, and ordered the ballancings of the clouds! how he stretched out the North o're the empty place, and hung the earth upon nothing!* how he form'd the first Man out of the dust of the ground, breath'd into his Nostrils the immortal *Halitus*, or Breath of life, and made that last Imperial Draught to stand the *Beauty*, the

the *Dominion*, and the *Sabbaoth* of all his wondrous works! in a word, how raviſhing a Reflexion muſt the *Creation* needs be to Men and Angels too, when *God Almighty* is Repreſented in the *ſecond* of *Geneſis*, as it were *ſitting down*, Contemplating, and with all intellectual complacency ſurveying the *Accompliſh'd Miracle!*

And as for *Providence*, what fuller matter for our Celebrations have we, than to conſider, how all the unaccountable paſſages here below, which ſeem ſo rugged, and like wild Contingencies to us, are notwithſtanding particularly directed by the certain guidance of an *Almighty Wiſdom*, and in their proper ſeaſons produc'd by a Beautiful Order of Cauſes! that not only *Univerſal Nature*, but *Nations*, *Cities*, *Private perſons*, their *Policies*, *Juſtice*, *Thoughts* and *Contrivances*, are evermore *Actuated*, *Advanced*, or *Confounded*, by the imperceptible ſtreams of a *Divine Prerogative!* And that all that multitude of ſtrange Appearances, which look like ſo many Monſtrous and Extravagant *Lines* to us in *this poſition*, will one day be reflected into a *Regular piece*, and make a glorious Figure in the Beatific Viſion!

I cannot well conceive how the *Epicurean* could ever be thought effectually to *Praiſe* and *Worſhip* the *Deity*, only for the bare *Excellency*

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of his *Being*; whom he fancied to be like ſome *Perſian* Monarch, Moroſely Great, full of himſelf, and his own Solitude, of a Cloyſter'd Majeſty, or a *Providence* that never ſtoopt below the Heavens; whereas the *Stoïc* more truly tells us, *Nulla Majeſtas ſine Bonitate*; and we are ſufficiently ſatisfy'd that there was nothing ſo powerful to awaken *Gratitude*, and reconcile men to the Sacrifices of Religion, as that *Tranſcendent goodneſs* and *particular Care* which men evidently found to flow from what they Worſhip'd. I grant the *Sun*, by reaſon of its *bright Appearance* and reſplendency, will naturally excite a Tranſient *Wonder* in Beholders; but yet I queſtion whether ever it would have been *Ador'd*, (as it certainly was by the greateſt part of the Heathen world) and have had its *own Frankincenſe* offer'd it again, if it had not been for that *Annual* and Experienc'd *Courſe* of *Benefits*, which its continual Influences Hatch, produce, and perfect, for the Generations of Men.

What weighty ingredients, and commanding Subjects of *Adoration*, were the Extraordinary Managements of *Providence* in behalf of the *Jews* and their Religion! And accordingly we find the *Royal Pſalmiſt* every where paraphraſing on thoſe great and numerous *Miracles* of *Ægypt* and

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the *Deſart* in an exceeding ſublimity of Phraſe, in all the Raptures of *Eaſtern Poeſie!* and here might be one reaſon given why the *Inanimate Creation* is ſo *diſtinctly* call'd upon in the *Old Teſtament* to *Praiſe* the Lord; becauſe ſo many of thoſe Beings had ſtarted from their *own Law* and *Natures*, to be either an Eminent *reſcue*, or a mighty *Conduct* to the Choſen people; that in the *Jewiſh œconomy* it is hard to determine, whether greater *Miracles* were perform'd by the Miniſtry of the *Elements*, or of the appointed *Angels*.

2. We may be ſaid to praiſe the Lord with our *Imagination*, when we ſtudy to adorn our *Divine Conceptions* with the moſt *Excellent Idea's*, with the moſt *lively Repreſentations* we can invent: for not only Reaſon and Judgment, but alſo Imagination and Fancy; not only the *Firmament*, but even the *Meteors* too, are call'd upon to *praiſe* the Lord.

The *Imagination* is the chief Spring and Engine of our *Affections*; it gives Sublimity, Spirit, and Vivacity to our *Conceptions*, Beauty and colour to our *Expreſſions*, and communicates all thoſe agreeable *Illuſtrations* which ſerve to adorn the *ſeverity* of *Reaſon*. The exacteſt *Science* we are acquainted with, cannot ſupply us with ſuch cautious forms of Speech, but that they are full of So-

Soleciſm, extreamly defective and inadequate, when apply'd to Notions concerning *God* and *Heaven*: The moſt accurate *wiſdom* of Words that can be invented, cannot defend it ſelf from many *Abſurdities*, when *poſitively* converſant about an *Infinite Object*, and which cannot be fully comprehended; becauſe in ſuch a caſe there is a greater Latitude of ſtill ſhewing what a thing *is not*, than what *it is*. But then what we want of ſtrict *ſcientifical propriety* in our Diſcourſes concerning *Divine* ſubjects, may be nobly ſupply'd by rais'd and *figurative adumbrations*: And this is wholly the buſineſs of the *Imagination*; which, when it has warily receiv'd the *Truth* and *Worth* of its Object from a *ſuperiour faculty*, may be allow'd to raiſe the Mind into a nobler Amplitude of thought, and to kindle it into vaſter Conceptions; and then to beautifie and ſet them forth with all thoſe proper Ornaments which uſually recommend a *ſpeculation* to our *Affections*.

Fancy, indeed, is not permitted to give a poſitive and *definitive* ſentence, or to cloſe up its Period with an *Anathema*; but it may ſearch for *lively Repreſentations*: For ſuch *ſimilitudes* of things as may beſt ſuit with the *Analogy* of our *Natures*; alſo for ſuch tranſcendent and

ſuperlative Terms, as are moſt apt to inflame the Soul, and to *ſhadow* to us the ſpiritual *ſecrecie* of *Myſterious Truth*. And therefore the *Holy Scripture* has every where exhibited to us its *heavenly Wiſdom* in *Parables*, and *ſenſible Types*; and proportion'd its *Revelations* more to the *Imaginations* of Men, than to their more *ſubtile* modes of *Reaſoning*. Therefore alſo God appeared to *Moſes* in a *Cloud*, and his Glory ſhone through a *Veil*; that ſince the *Prophet* was not able to ſuſtain his more *open Appearance*, he might with ſafety underſtand his *Infinity* by the *concealment* of an *indefinite* and *myſterious* Declaration; and more ardently deſire a further Manifeſtation of thoſe *Excellencies*, which were but imperfectly revealed to him in remote and diſtant Scenes: for no man ſeem'd more acquainted with God than *Moſes*, and no man ſeem'd more importunate to know him better: *I beſeech thee ſhew me thy Glory*, Exod. 33. 18.

Similitudes and *Metaphors* in *Religion*, are thoſe *Clouds* of *Incenſe* wherewith at the ſame time we both *enter* and *obſcure* the *Sanctum Sanctorum*: We receive thoſe ſenſible Repreſentations, and gracious Condeſcentions which God hath been pleas'd to make us of his own *Nature* and the *other World*, in the ſame manner as the Diſciples did

did the Diſcourſes of our Saviour going to *Emmaus:* we have not a full *comprehenſion* of what is thus *Figur'd* to us; but yet we are religiouſly affected, we have a *ſpiritual Senſation* of its nnutterable import, and our hearts *burn* within us.

The Strength and Vehemency of the *Imagination* will ſometimes carry forth the *Reaſon* and *Judgment* to make *new Diſcoveries*; 'twill excite them to take ſuch Circuits and Travels in the contemplation of *Eternal Beings*, till the Soul is ready to *ſwim* and grow giddy, and the *ſpeculation* turns almoſt *Apoplexy*; it will ſometimes actuate the mind to a ſtretch and emanation beyond its *preſent Order*, to a taſte and immature anticipation of *unproportion'd Knowledge*: And this does not proceed from the heat and elevation of contemplative and *ſplenetick* Heads, but it is the ſober atteſtation, and examin'd experience of more fix'd and ſolid Brains.

It is reported of a *Metaphyſical Divine* of our own *Church*, that by a long aſſiduity of thinking, and a conſtant ardour of Meditation, he could ſometimes refine and ſublimate a Theorem to that degree, till it became too nice even for his own examination, when he had abated of that *Temper* in which he firſt fram'd it; that when the *intellectual fire* was out, and his Brain was ſunk into

its ordinary dimensions, he could not justifie that speculation to his cooler review, which he was certain had an exact conformity to his more rais'd Capacity.

However, we need not fear any *Illusion*, any *Phanaticism* from the *innocent* Excesses of the *Fancy*, whilst they are onely made the *private* Nourishment of an *Holy Life*; whilst they onely promote our *Adorations*, not determine our *Opinions*; whilst they only enter our *Closet-Devotions*, not our *Publick Services*, or *Creeds*. It being also easie to distinguish by the *concomitance* or *absence* of *Humility* and *Love*, when our minds are gently fill'd with *Divine Images*, or when they are Enthusiastically *possess'd* with *presumptuous Enquiries*. And thus the *Imagination*, the meanest and most trivial faculty of the *Humane Soul*, under a good management may be an admirable Instrument and incentive of *Divine Praise* and *Adoration*; even as God Almighty thought fit to chuse the *Rainbow*, that Circle of phantastic colours, for the Symbole and *Sacrament* of his Beloved Attribute, his *Mercy*.

3*ly*. We may be said to *Praise* the Lord with our *Affections*, when our *Adoration* is perform'd with strong vehemency of soul, and intensness of Spirit, with the Unions of *Love* and *Wonder*, and such-

ſuch-like Bright Affections, as *perfect* and exalt our moſt *ſpiritual* Duties.

The *Will* is alſo comprehended in the *Affections*: For as the Common *Paſſions* in their worſt acceptation are the Deformities and Turbulencies of the *Animal Nature*; ſo the *Affections* are onely the freſher gales of *Virtue*, the more *enliven'd Acts* of the Rational and Superiour *Will*: and as the *former* raiſe commotions and irregularities in the *Bloud* and *Humours* of the *Body*; ſo theſe *latter* invigorate the *Faculties* of the *Soul*, making them *Heroical* and *Divine* in their Emanations.

Now as the capacity of the *Intellect* is much larger than that of the *Senſes*, ſo the amplitude of the *Will* and *Affections* far ſurpaſſes that of the *Underſtanding*; and therefore God has requir'd that our *Deſire* and *Love* of him ſhould be more *perfect* and complete than our *Knowledge* of him: for we are bound to entertain his *Perfections* with the *cloſeſt adheſion* of *Heart* and Soul, though we can apprehend them onely with a *Partial* and enigmatical *Knowledge*.

Let men therefore boaſt of their Mighty *Reaſonings*, their cloſe *Deductions*, their ſtrong-link'd *Conſequences*, and their elaborate *Demonſtrations* in *Religion*; when they have done all to juſtifie them-

themſelves in a *cautious advance* towards Heaven, they will find that the *Beſt Divinity* conſiſts in *Love* and *Wonder*; and that there are ſuch *enlargements* of the Soul ariſing from theſe *Affections*, as none can ſignifie, none can conceive, but thoſe who have lain under the *Bleſſed Experience*.

III. I will endeavour to point out ſome of thoſe *Benefits* which will ariſe from a worthy performance of the Duty.

Now this *Holy Exerciſe* being worthily perform'd, will exalt our *Faith* beyond the reach of *Sophiſtry* or *Prophaneneſs*; 'twill eſtabliſh in us a *permanent* love to Goodneſs, and a temper of antipathy to the contradictions and contumelies of Vice; 'twill convey our fervent Meditations to ſuch ſafe and peaceful Heights, till the falſe Beauties of the World make no Impreſſion on us, and its keeneſt Temptations are out-diſtanc't: It will ſecure all the ſtages of an holy life, and reduce that Barbarous, Warlike, Stubborn, and Malicious *Religion*, which is now in Vogue, to the truly Ancient Primitive *Chriſtianity*; to a chearful and ſerene Principle of Meekneſs, Humility, conſtant Obedience, and Univerſal Love.

When the Soul is made *tender* with this *Heavenly Converſe*, made apt to *kindle* at every repreſentation

tation of Divine *Goodneſs*, to meet and embrace with every *attribute*; how vile and loathſome muſt the *deformity* of *Sin* needs appear? The very *Tranſports* of *Adoration*, whilſt they continue upon us, are a natural preſervative againſt the Encroachments of Vice; and when the *Holy Agitation* is ceas'd, it commonly ſettles into a *lively calm* of laſting *Gratitude* and *Love*.

But to ſpeak more *particularly*, *Praiſe* and *Adoration* are actions *perfective* of thoſe very *Faculties* which perform them.

For, they give a Divine Brightneſs to our *Reaſon*, free it from the illuſions of *Sence* and *Paſſion*, fix it on uſeful enquiries, and in all its Diſcoveries make it ſerviceable to the *Sanctuary*: for not onely *Religious*, but even *Natural* objects may be contemplated and examin'd by the *humble Adorer* into Myſterious ſubjects of *Devotion* and *Wonder*.

The True *Chriſtian Philoſopher*, even from his common obſervations in ſecular Learning, will by a due *Analyſis* of Meditation open to himſelf a delicious proſpect of Heavenly Glories; purſue every *Motion* and *Effect* to its firſt *Cauſe* and *Author*, till he finds his *Scale* of *Contemplation* to look like *Jacobs Ladder*, with Angels aſcending and deſcending: whilſt the proud Enquiring

Natura-

list, who sacrifices more to his *Hypothesis* than his *God*, will reap nothing but Presumption and Contempt of Heaven from his Conversation even with the *Divinest* Objects. He will call a True *Miracle* the *Luxuriancy* of *Nature*, an Extraordinary Act of *Providence* onely the *sudden eruption* of a *Natural*, though hidden Cause; or at least he will debase these *immediate Operations* of the Almighty to some cheap piece of *Motion* and *Mechanism*, that may serve to ease and pacifie his Wonder; thus loosing the improvement of his *Faith* and *Humility*, by the Arrogancy of his *Wit* and *Invention!*

This exalted Exercise of *Praising* and Blessing the Lord, will also fill the *Imagination* with Heavenly *Imagery*. 'Twill adorn it with the Vine and Pomgranate of the *Temple*, making that *Faculty* an holy Receptacle of pious *Emblems*, which in its Corrupt Nature is the chief Seat and Empire of *Original Sin*; the Infernal Theatre, where all the busiest Scenes of *Temptation* are display'd. 'Twill teach us not to lay out our best superlative words on Earthly things; not to embalm Rottenness and Corruption with the Epithites of Divinity; not to Deifie the Ambitious with sacred Oratory, or to commit Idolatry with a too Bounteous Invention; but to reserve a peculiar *Hierarchy* of *Language* for our Superior Intercourse. Lastly,

Lastly, It will spiritualize our *Affections*, call them off from the defilements of the world, make them languish in unaccountable Unions, and give them a tender Sympathy with all the Endearments of the *Canticles*: It will create in us such an *Habitual* Indulgence towards the *sweetnesses* of a Religious life, that amidst the Avocations of the world, the disturbances of secular business, and the *afflictions* of *Common Conversation*, we shall be able to maintain a *secret Under-current* of pious Aspirations and Affections.

Let us therefore summon up all that is *within us*, all the *Faculties* and *Powers* of our Souls to *Bless* and *Praise* the Lord with fervent Gratulations! For surely, Christianity is not only a *bare Avoydance* of Evil, a plausible course in *Moral* Actions, or an External living up to the *Decency* of a *Station*, (which yet in a Degenerate Age are no mean Patterns and Examples) but certainly there are requir'd some *Affectionate Heats*, some Breathings and Pantings after further degrees of *Holiness*, and an *Indefinite Perfection*. And though the *cold Logicians* are apt to call this a *Spiritual Romance*, and the effect of a Religious *Spleen*; yet we know of what *Complexion* they were, who styl'd the *miraculous effusions* of the *Holy Ghost*, *Drunkenness*, and the fumes of *New Wine*; *St. Paul's*

Pauls Learning, and the Sobriety of his Reaſon, *Madneſs* and *Diſtraction.*

Surely, no man can be an *Heretick* in his *ſecret Communions* with *God*, or a dangerous *Enthuſiaſt* in his *Inward Adorations*: And if ſome *Weakneſſes* have been found among the *private Ardours* of the *Retir'd*; alas! what are they, but the glorious *Frailties* of the *Pathetic* ſoul, the Noble *Extravagancies* of a *ſeraphick* Temper, and an impetuous Devotion!

I know there is a *Lower Draught* of Chriſtianity; but I ſpeak a *practical Myſtery* to the *Wiſe*, to the *Perfect*, to the *Prophets*, and *Sons* of the Prophets; who know how to be warm and *affectionate* in Religion, without being *Superſtitious*; how to *Adore*, without being *Idolatrous.*

I ſpeak to *you*, who are plac'd in all the Circumſtances of an *Extatick life*; who are ſo nearly acquainted with the *intelligible* World, that what is but plain *Picture* to the Vulgar, is *Hieroglyphick* to *you*; they muſt be contented with the bare *External* View, whilſt *you* enrich your minds with the more Excellent *Moral* and *Myſtery:* To *you*, who are able to compoſe and conſecrate the Recollection of your *Daily Studies* into an *Evening Hymn*; whoſe *conſtant* Imployment conſiſts in ſuch an *Eminency* of Spiritual Duties, as others faintly attempt in ſeldom Feſtivals with ſecular Mix-

Mixtures and divided Powers. To *you*, laſtly, who are perpetually attending on the Altar; who love to ſpeak of the Glory of Gods Kingdom, and to talk of his Power; who are continually ſtanding before the Throne, having your lives hid with Chriſt in God, in Internal Joy, and the ſecrecies of an Incomprehenſible peace; who live under ſuch an Extraordinary ſenſe of the Divine *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, that *you* find it difficult to refrain from publiſhing his Perfections continually, and from letting the Miſtaken world know, that it is our *Priviledge*, our *Duty*, and our *Excellency*, never to ceaſe from uttering in *ſome meaſure* our *Gratulations* and *Praiſes* here on Earth, 'till they *Expire* into *Greater*; 'till we arrive to thoſe *Perfect Harmonies* above, where our *Glorify'd Souls* and *Bodies* ſhall for ever dwell in an *Eternal Triumph* of *Adoration* and *Amazement!* where, like the voice of Trumpets, of Thunders, and like the noiſe of many Waters, we ſhall for ever ſing *Hallelujah*; Salvation, and Glory, and Honour, and Power be to the *Bleſſed Trinity:* And again we ſhall ſing *Hallelujah!*

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